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LYRICS FROM A LIBRARY

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BY CLINTON SCOLLARD



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THOMAS BIRD MOSHER
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FROM the oriels, one by one,
 Slowly fades the setting sun ;
On the marge of afternoon
Stands the new-born crescent moon ;
In the twilight's crimson glow
Dim the quiet alcoves grow ;
Drowsy-lidded Silence smiles
On the long, deserted aisles ;
Out of every shadowy nook
Spirit faces seem to look,
Some with smiling eyes, and some
With a sad entreaty dumb ; —
He who shepherded his sheep
On the wild Sicilian steep,
He above whose grave are set
Sprays of Roman violet ; —
Poets, sages — all who wrought
In the crucible of thought.
Day by day as seasons glide
On the great eternal tide,
Noiselessly they gather thus
In the twilight beauteous,
Hold communion each with each,
Closer than our earthly speech,
Till within the east are born
Premonitions of the morn !

LYRICS FROM A LIBRARY



THE BOOK-LOVER



LOVE a book, if there but run
From title-page to colophon
Something sincere that sings or glows,
Whate'er the text be, rhyme or prose.
And high-perched on some window-seat,

Or in some ingle-side retreat,
Or in an alcove consecrate
To lore and to the lettered great,
For happiness I need not look
Beyond the pages of my book.
Yea, I believe that, like an elf,
I'd be contented with a shelf
If thereupon with me might sit
Some work of wisdom or of wit
Whereto, at pleasure, I might turn,
And the fair face of Joy discern !

I love a book, — its throbbing heart !
And while I may not hold the art

That dresses it in honor scant, —
The tree-calf “tooled” or “crushed” Levant,—
Rather a rare soul, verily,
Than a bedizened husk for me !
So, though no Midas’ magic hands
To gold transmute my barren sands,
Though friendly Fame deign not to lay
About my brows the vine and bay,
Though fond eyes marry not with mine,
Nor lip to lip give sacred sign,
The core of all content I know,
A blessing that is balm for woe ;
On life with level gaze I look,
And all because I love — a book !

ON A COPY OF KEATS' "ENDYMION"

HAS not the glamoured season come once more,
When earth puts on her arras of soft green?
See where along the meadow rillet's shore
The wild-rose buds unfold!
Eastward the boughs with murmurous laughter lean
To warn themselves in morning's generous gold.
The foxgloves nod along the English lanes
That saw erewhile the dancing sprites of snow;
Night-long the leaf-hid nightingale complains
With such melodious woe
That Sleep, enamored of her soaring strains,
Is widely wakeful as the dim hours go.

Ope but the page — and hark, the impassioned bird
That through the hush of the be-shadowed hours
Pours in the ear of dark its melting word!
Here is as mellow song
As ever welled from pleachèd laurel bowers,
Or e'er was borne soft orient winds along;
Here may one list all ecstasies they sung,
The shepherds and the maids of Arcady,
Flower-garlanded what time the world was young; —
Pandean minstrelsy,
Low flutings from slim pipes of silver tongue
Played by the dryads on some upland lea.

And blent with these are heavenly whisperings
As faint as whitening poplars make at dawn,
Sublime suggestions of fine-fingered strings
Touched in celestial air,
And earthward through the dulling ether drawn,
Yet falling on us more than earthly fair ;
The voice divine that young Endymion knew
In the cool woodland's darkmost depths by night,
When godlike ardors thrilled him through and through ;
And his voice from the height
Whither, on wakening, drenched with chilly dew,
He sought the goddess in the gathering light.

But ah, what mournful memories are mine,
Song-wakened at this lavish summer-tide !
Can I forget that sombre cypress line
By old Rome's ruined wall,
The lonely grave that alien grasses hide,
And the pathetic silence shrouding all ?
Who would forget ? Blest be the song that bears
My soul across aerial seas of space
As wingèdly as airy fancy fares !
For now that earth's worn face
The radiant glow of life's renewal wears,
Would I in reverence seek that sacred place.

There would I lay these woven shreds of rhyme
In lieu of scattered heart's-ease and the rose.

Behold how Song has triumphed over Time,
For still *his* song rings clear,
Though where the tender Roman violet grows
Deep has he slumbered many a fateful year !
If to the poet's rapt imaginings
Beauty be wed, with love of purpose high,
Despite the cynic and his scornful flings
Song shall not fail and die,
But like the bird that up the azure springs
Still thrill the heart, still fill the listening sky !

WITH HERRICK IN SPRING

NOW that all the wakened hills
Arrased are with tender green,
And the noon-gold daffodils
Greet their over-lord, the sun,
Now that tulips show their sheen,
And a thousand ardors run
Mead and orchard lane along —
Voices virginal with song —
Here 's the book unfolds to me
How to-day may still be won
The old path to Arcady !

Pastoral revelry and rite,
Clear airs consecrate to Pan,
Dreams of innocent delight,
Love in frolic guise arrayed,
Merriment of maid and man
In the sunshine and the shade,
Here behold, compacted rare,
Ever fresh and ever fair ! —
Herrick, pray reveal to me
(Singer Hesperidian)
Still the path to Arcady !

JOHN CLEVELAND, POET-CAVALIER

HE was a fearless fighting man,
This handsome anti-Puritan
Who smote with pen and eke with sword
Against the bluff Cromwellian horde.
Disciple deft of Doctor Donne,
Had kindlier fate but shone upon
His curls, in cut so cavalier,
Delightful ditties to endear
His name adown the years might ring
For man's perennial pleasuring.
Alack-a-day ! It might not be !
For he, of his Latinity
So proud, so fain of his conceits
Beside the Cam's elm-bowered retreats,
From haven was swept fast and far,
And under grim War's sanguine star
Was rudely tossed and racked and swirled,
Then pent within a prison-world,
And finally flung forth too spent
To long fight life's vexed argument.
You know him not? Have hardly heard
His lightest claim to fame averred ?
Well, 't is but flotsam, that may be,
The all he left posterity.
Yet somehow in the strokes he dealt
"Old Noll," (I pledge he raised a welt !)

And in dactylic dash displayed
Anent some merry Cambridge maid,
And in fleet lyric flights where he
Ran riot in hyperbole,
I seem to catch — elusive — thin —
The magical what-might-have-been !
So, o'er the gulfs of Time, good cheer,
John Cleveland, poet-cavalier !

VIVE LA BAGATELLE

(“SWIFT’S CHEERFUL CREED”)

A BUMPER to the jolly Dean
Who, in “Augustan” times,
Made merriment for fat and lean
In pranksome prose and rhymes !
Ah, but he drove a lively quill !
With quips he wove a spell ;
His creed — he cried it with a will —
Was “*Vive la Bagatelle !*”

Oh, there were reckless jesters then !
And when a man was hit
He quick returned the stroke again
With trenchant blade of wit.
'T was parry, thrust and counter-thrust
That round the board befell ;
They quaffed the wine and crunched the crust
With “*Vive la Bagatelle !*”

How rang the genial laugh of Gay
At Pope’s defiant ire !
How Parnell’s sallies brought in play
The rapier touch of Prior !

And how o'er all the banter's shift,—
The laughter's fall and swell,—
Up-leaped the great guffaw of Swift,
With "*Vive la Bagatelle!*"

Grave moralist, frown not so dark!
Purse not thy lip severe!
'T will warm the heart if ye but hark
The mirth of yester year.
To-day we wear too stern a face;
We slave and buy and sell;
Let us forget mad Mammon's race
In "*Vive la Bagatelle!*"

ON A COPY OF THEOCRITUS

(VENICE, 1493)

THEOCRITUS, we love thy song,
Where thyme is sweet and meads are sunny,
Where shepherd swains and maidens throng,
And bees Hyblean hoard their honey.

Since ancient Syracusan days
It year by year has grown the sweeter,
For year by year life's opening ways
Run more in prose and less in metre.

And than this quarto, vellum-clad,
You could not wish a rarer setting ;
Beholding, you must still be glad,
If you behold without forgetting.

Manutius was the Printer's name —
(A *Publisher* was then unheard of)
A fellow of some worthy fame,
If history we take the word of.

Think when its pages first were cut,
And eager eyes above them hovered,
Our proudest dwelling was a hut —
America was just discovered !

Then Venice was indeed a queen,
And taught the tawny Turk to fear her ;
Now has she lost her royal mien,
And yet we could not hold her dearer.

Betwixt these covers there is bound
A charm that needeth no completion ;
A golden atmosphere is found
At once Sicilian and Venetian.

So, while our plausible song we raise
And hail the bard whose name is famous,
Let us for once divide the bays,
And to the Printer cry — *Laudamus !*

THE BOOKSTALL

IT stands in a winding street,
A quiet and restful nook,
Apart from the endless beat
Of the noisy heart of Trade.
There 's never a spot more cool
Of a hot midsummer day
By the brink of a forest pool,
Or the bank of a crystal brook
In the maples' breezy shade,
Than the bookstall old and gray.

Here are precious gems of thought
That were quarried long ago,
Some in vellum bound, and wrought
With letters and lines of gold ;
Here are curious rows of " calf,"
And perchance an Elzevir ;
Here are countless " mos " of chaff,
And a parchment folio,
Like leaves that are cracked with cold
All puckered and brown and sere.

In every age and clime
Live the monarchs of the brain :
And the lords of prose and rhyme,
Years after the long last sleep

Has come to the kings of earth
And their names have passed away,
Rule on through death and birth ;
And the thrones of their domain
Are found where the shades are deep,
In the bookstall old and gray.

A FIRST EDITION

A MOST exclusive clan are we,
Proud of our peerless pedigree ;
Will Caxton fathered us, a man
Shaped somewhat on the clerkly plan,
But one of whom we 're fond withal,
Industrious and not prodigal.
Now comely, now unkempt, we show —
Octavo, duodecimo !
But whether dimmed or bright our page,
We glow to know our lineage.
Black-lettered first, clear-lettered last —
The present, or the golden past —
We stand content our fame upon
From fly-leaf through to colophon.

As among all patricians, fine
And fair ensamples of our line
Arouse our self-complacency ;
Viz., Caxton's priceless Malory ;
A Tyndale Bible (choicer none !) ;
A Shakespeare in full folio done ;
A song that tells of Paradise
Which Milton saw with darkened eyes ;
And that rare " find " of later vein,
The little *liber*, Tamerlane !

And now a word of warning, ye
Who seek our constant company !
Unless your purses, plethoric, hold
The round and clearly-minted gold,
Abjure us, shun us, lest the night
Creep on ye, and pale candle-light
Find ye by us uncomforted,
And slipping supperless to bed !

A BOOKMAN'S PLEASURES

LIFE yields rich pleasures in its varied round,—
The fair unfolding of the season's store,—
Hearts by the ties of faithful friendship bound,
The litany of love and all its lore;
The bud of beauty opening evermore
In forms of fresh perfection that allure;
The morn's unfailing miracle; the pure
And passionless decline of twilight-tide;
Yet what gives joy more sweet, serene and sure
Than some dear volume by the ingle-side!

There is delight in melody; — the sound
The minstrel sea makes as it woos the shore;
The strains the wind evokes; the music found
Where feathered throats their ecstasy outpour; —
In stilled aroma from the rose's core;
In the mime's grave or comic portraiture;
In rest and dreams when rigid frosts immure;
In deeds self-sacrifice has sanctified;
Yet what gives joy more sweet, serene and sure
Than some dear volume by the ingle-side!

Theocritus whom Grecian garlands crowned;
The Mantuan who Augustan laurels wore;
The sire of English song who broke the ground
Whereon have trodden many a tuneful score;

Avon's immortal son whom all adore ;
The twain who sleep by Roman walls secure ;
And he who far from Highland loch and moor
Keeps his last tryst where southern seas sweep wide ;
Aye, what gives joy more sweet, serene and sure
Than some dear volume by the ingle-side !

Friends, of the many pleasures that we poor
Mortals may taste, the while that we endure
This wayfaring, till death our paths divide,
Know there is none more sweet, serene and sure
Than some dear volume by the ingle-side !

THE POET-CAVALIERS

WHEN darkness mantles meads and glades,
And shrill the north wind snarls,
I love to read of those gay blades
That trod the court of Charles ;

Those who made mock in merry song
At Fate's "abhorred shears,"
And wore their swords and love-locks long,—
The poet-cavaliers.

Suckling and Lovelace capping rhymes,
They hold my fancy thrall,
Strolling in jaunty ease betimes
The gardens of Whitehall ;

Tom Carew with his pliant grace,
And likewise pliant pen,
Who set so blithe and brisk a pace
For all the "tribe of Ben."

They sleep in the unfathomed dark,
In Death's uncharted maze,
And yet their living forms I mark
Despite the lengthening days.

So twine I one more laurel wreath,—
“The Muse’s coronals,—”
For those who laughed and quaffed beneath
The shadow of St. Paul’s!

IN AN ALCOVE

ONCE more am I at middle day
In tranquil twilight hid away,
Where not a sound disturbs the sense
Of book-encompassed indolence.
Pale, grave-eyed Science does not brood
Above this sunless solitude,
Nor does Romance's ardent face
With antique glamour fill the place ;
A fairer form the vision views,
The gracious presence of the Muse.
Small meed of gold she offers those
Who leave the wider ways of Prose
To follow where her foot-fall leads
Along the asphodelian meads,
Nor is she prodigal to lay
Upon the brow the wreathèd bay :
Yet are her votaries content,
Aye, more, their lot seems opulent,
If on them be by her conferred
Some transient, dream-evoking word !
It may be but a whisper low,
Yet straightway are the skies aglow ;
It may be but the lightest breath,
And yet how it illumineth !
And though beyond all heart-appeal
Her lips a cruel silence seal,

A holier influence fills the air
Through her benignant presence there ;
Ah, how would earth and heaven unroll
Could one but know her lyric soul !

WILLIAM WINSTANLEY, CRITIC

(1687)

LONG are the years, Sir Critic, long,
Since you your galaxy of song
Set with such pomp and proud intent
Fair in the Muse's firmament !
We can but smile at your acclaim,
Or be it praise, or be it blame ; —
Whether at Milton's fame you flout,
Cry how his candle is snuffed out,
And glory, in judicial ease,
O'er his poetic obsequies ;
Or whether you the merits chant
Of Cleveland or of Davenant ;
Patronize Shakespeare, or dismiss
Herrick with light hypothesis.

Out of the misty long ago
This truth your volume lives to show,—
That, though their wit be Hermes-shod,
Critics, like Jove, do sometimes nod.
'T is Time alone, with certain hand,
Winnows the gold from shard and sand.

A BOOK-LOVER'S WISH

IF I stray wood-ward, not for me
The loudest warbler in the tree,
But rather one that sings apart
The simple songs that touch the heart.
And so, although I may aspire,
Be mine the temperate desire —
Not for the missal-marvel old
Illumed with mediæval gold,
Not for the rare black-letter text
O'er which his soul a Caxton vext,
Nor what some seek through shine and snow,
A priceless Shakespeare folio !

But only this — one little book
Wherethrough do bird and bee and brook,
In their melodious employ,
Sing on and on and on of Joy ;
And where, amid the Maytime flowers,
Love, without rival, rules the hours.
One little book — whose title date
Reads quaintly, 1648 ;
In Saint Paul's churchyard, we are told,
Sold at the Crown and Marygold.
One little book — if fortune please —
Herrick, a “first” HESPERIDES !

MAY BY AVON-SIDE

NOW should you stray by Avon-side
This Maytime of the year,
In Charlecote Park will sing the lark,
And roam the fallow deer ;
And the white plume of hawthorn bloom,
The fair web of earth's wonder-loom,
Make lovely Warwickshire !

And should you stray through Stratford streets
When home the good folk throng,
And shadows flit, and lights are lit
The winding ways along,
From out the casements open thrown,
A-down the twilight breezes blown,
Will soar the sound of song !

And should you stray through Trinity close
To bow in praise or prayer,
Where elm trees braid their shine and shade
In the soft Avon air,
Whether it be by stream or street,
Or where the minster arches meet,
His spirit will be there !

Shakespeare, of the immortal phrase,
Of deathless rhythm and rhyme,
Above the transitory days
Still radiant and sublime,
The glory of whose name and fame
Is limned as by a torch of flame
Upon the walls of Time !

ALAS, FOR THE FLEET WINGS OF TIME

(BALLADE TO FRANÇOIS VILLON)

WHERE, prithee, are thy comrades bold
 With ruffle and with furbelow,
Who, in the merry days of old,
 Made light of all but red wine's flow?
Where now are cavalier and beau
Who joyed with thee in that bright clime?
 Ah, dust to dust! — and none may know! —
Alas, for the fleet wings of Time!

Where now are they that gleaming gold
 Led on to many a bandit blow,
Who roamed with thee the vine-clad wold
 And shadowed vales, and shared thy woe?
Where they who in the sunset glow
With thee heard Paris' sweet bells chime?
 Ah, they are gone! — and still men go! —
Alas, for the fleet wings of Time!

And where are they, those maids untold,
 Thy lighter loves, each one thy foe?
No more are they than crumbled mold,
 With earth above and earth below;
And she who won, aside to throw

Thy love, the promise of thy prime,
Doth any seek her name? ah, no! —
Alas, for the fleet wings of Time!

Singer of ballade and rondeau,
Deft shaper of the dancing rhyme,
Thy name alone survives the snow; —
Alas, for the fleet wings of Time!

IZAAK WALTON'S NAME

AS I went down the crowded Fleet,
An idler without aim,
I marked above the roaring street
Dear Izaak Walton's name.

A marble tablet in the wall
(Saint Dunstan's in the West)
A brief but fair memorial
In graven lines expressed.

How sweet 'mid London's turbid ways,
'Neath skies so dull and dim,
To find in terse but gracious phrase
This kindly word of him !

Dear Izaak of the simple heart,
The quiet country love ! —
I saw before my vision start
The winding dale of Dove ;

Its slopes that shimmered in the sun,
Its stream that rippling ran,
And on the grassy margin one —
One happy fisherman !

Some treasure statesmen, martyrs, kings,
Heroes of noble fame,
But here a vagrant rhymers sings
Dear Izaak Walton's name !

THE POET

BID him wear no rue to-day
In this blossomy tide of May ;
Give him rather for his wearing,
On his faring,
Something fragrant, something gay !

Wild-plum spray, or apple-bloom,
Verdure of the cherry-loom,
Chalice of the amaryllis,
Valley-lilies,
White or purple lilac-plume !

So shall he go down the spring
Like a gypsy, vagranting,
With the vernal charm in capture,
The old rapture
In his heart to sing and sing !

AT GOLDSMITH'S GRAVE

ON Goldsmith's grave to-day
I found a wreath of bay,
Laid by some loving hand ; whose, none may say.

Though since he ceased to be
The surge of Time's great sea
Has swept unceasing, green his memory !

For through his limpid lines,
Unfailing, one divines
A humorous tenderness that sings and shines.

'T was his unconscious part
To touch the human heart
With a fine feeling that is more than art.

So, where his bones repose
In the gray Temple-close,
Shall mingle laurel, ivy and the rose !

A FORGOTTEN BARD

IN a dim nook beneath the street
Where Pine and noisy Nassau meet,
This little book of song I found
In a scarred morocco quaintly bound.
Each musty and bemildewed leaf
Bespeaks long years of grime and grief;
Long years,— for on the title-page
A dim date tells the volume's age.

Ah, who was he, the bard that sung
In that dead century's stately tongue
In those vanished days of yore? —
An empty name — I know no more!
Yet, as I read, will fancy form
A face whose glow is fresh and warm,
A frank, clear eye wherein I view
A nature open, genial, true.

Mayhap he dreamed of fame, but fate
Has barred to him that temple's gate;
He loved,— was loved,— for one divines
An answered passion in his lines;
He died, ah, yes, he died, but when
He ceased to walk the ways of men,
Or where his clay with mother clay
Commingles sweetly, who can say!

In pity will I give his book
A not too lonely study nook,
Where kindly gleams of light may play
Across it of a wintry day ;
And I will take it down sometimes
To con the prim and polished rhymes.
Will thus, when the gray years have fled,
Some book of mine be housed and read ?

TO WILLIAM SHARP

(FIONA MACLEOD)

THE waves about Iona dirge,
The wild winds trumpet over Skye ;
Shrill around Arran's cliff-bound verge
The gray gulls cry.

Spring wraps its transient scarf of green,
Its heathery robe, round slope and scar ;
And night, the scudding wrack between,
Lights its lone star.

But you who loved these outland isles,
Their gleams, their glooms, their mysteries,
Their eldritch lures, their druid wiles,
Their tragic seas,

Will heed no more, in mortal guise,
The potent witchery of their call,
If dawn be regnant in the skies,
Or evenfall.

Yet, though where suns Sicilian beam
The loving earth enfolds your form,
I can but deem these coasts of dream
And hovering storm

Still thrall your spirit — that it bides
By far Iona's kelp-strewn shore,
There lingering till time and tides
Shall surge no more.

THRENODY IN MAY

(IN MEMORY OF MADISON CAWEIN)

A GAIN the earth, miraculous with May,
Unfolds its vernal arras. Yester year
We strolled together 'neath the greening trees,
And heard the robin tune its flute note clear,
And watched above the white cloud squadrons veer,
And saw their shifting shadows drift away
Adown the Hudson, as ships seek the seas.
The scene is still the same. The violet
Unlids its virgin eye ; its amber ore
The dandelion shows, and yet, and yet,
He comes no more, no more !

He of the open and the generous heart,
The soul that sensed all flowerful loveliness,
The nature as the nature of a child ;
Who found some rapture in the wind's caress,
Beauty in humble weed and mint and cress,
And sang, with his incomparable art,
The magic wonder of the wood and wild.
The little people of the reeds and grass
Murmur their blithe, companionable lore,
The rills renew their minstrelsy. Alas,
He comes no more, no more !

And yet it seems as though he needs must come,
Albeit he has cast off mortality,
Such was his passion for the bourgeoning time,
Such to his spirit was the ecstasy
The hills and valleys chorus when set free,
No music mute, no lyric instinct dumb,
But keyed to utterance of immortal rhyme.
Ah, haply in some other fairer spring
He sees bright tides sweep over slope and shore,
But here how vain is all my visioning!
He comes no more, no more!

Poet and friend, wherever you may fare
Enwrapt in dreams, I love to think of you
Wandering amid the meads of asphodel,
Holding high converse with the exalted few
Who sought and found below the elusive clue
To beauty, and in that diviner air
Bowling in worship still to its sweet spell.
Why sorrow, then, though fate unkindly lays
Upon our questioning hearts this burden sore,
And though through all our length of hastening days
He comes no more, no more!

THE SONNET

WHAT is the sonnet? 'T is a lovely flower
Of fourteen perfect petals! From the bloom
Exhales so soft, so subtle a perfume
That it has sweetened many an empty hour;
Born in a beautiful Italian bower,
Fair root it found beneath the glow and gloom
Of changeful English skies, and welcome room
In other climes, each richer for its dower.

What passionate attar Shakespeare from it won!
How it for Milton bourgeoned, and how Keats
Nurtured it gladly in his garden-close!
Still in its heart hide undiscovered sweets;
So, poets, put your fondest care thereon,
As doth a gardener on his rarest rose!

AD MUSAM

MUSE, thou hast been my gracious solace long,
 Making melodious discordant days,
 Leading my feet adown the pleasant ways
Within the precincts of the gates of Song.
Thou hast interpreted grim Winter's wrong,
 The vernal wonder, Summer's bright displays,
 The pomp of Autumn ; many a varied phase
That life reveals with its trans-shifting throng.

The rich inheritor through thee am I
 Of castles, aye, of kingdoms ! Every clime
 And age yields something from its treasure-store
For thee to clothe anew and vivify.
 Dust buried by the tireless hands of Time
 Thou hast transmuted into magic ore !

KEATS

NOT as the pale youth dying piteously
 Upon a lonely pallet in old Rome,
 I think of Keats, nor lying 'neath the loam,
With violets covered and the laurel tree ;
But where the long swell of the Ægean Sea
 Upon the shores of Latmos flings its foam,
 A happy wanderer 'neath the cloudless dome
I dream of him, a spirit blithe and free.

Here seems he one with glad Endymion,
 Roving the windings of some moon-lit dale,
 Assoiled of all the sorrows of the years ;
 Hearing the rapture of the nightingale,
And knowing love's ecstatic benison
 Beyond the poignant touch of mortal tears !

A SUMMER MOOD

THE majesty of the Miltonic line
Allures me not to-day, nor paradise,
Unless it be in Julia's winsome eyes
As hymned by Herrick, with his lute-note fine ;
Not the Shakespearean altar-fire divine
Beguileth me, save where, in tender wise,
It plays through Rosalind's questions and replies,
Or Beatrice's sallies sets a-shine.

The day is one of laughing Lovelace mood,
Tricksy with frolic fancies such as gave
To Suckling's wit its nimbleness and zest ;
For me Terpsichore, the Muse they wooed —
Those cavaliers so debonair and brave —
And at her maddest and her merriest !

SIDNEY LANIER

THE marshes spread in the autumnal sun
 Their symphony of blended green and gold
 As when he saw them, while the multifold
Tide-heralds of the ocean race and run
Vociferous landward, and the creek-banks dun
 Feel the cool gush of waters o'er them rolled ;
 Inlet and cove caressed are and consoled,
And the parched meads have cooling solace won.

Ofttimes from sweet communion with his peers
 In that fair bourn beyond the dusk and dawn
 Whither he went, our eyes with grief bedimmed,
(Ah, stern are the irrevocable years !)
 I dream that he is earthward backward drawn
 To these lone marshes that he loved and hymned.

PHILIP FRENEAU

NOW that the vesper-planet's violet glow
Is smothered in a welter of gray cloud,
And all the winds that sweep the sky are loud,
I mind me how, one white night long ago,
Our earliest poet, valiant-souled Freneau,
By the stern stress of years assailed and bowed,
Fell by the way, and found a fatal shroud
In the benumbing silence of the snow !

When the young nation shook with war's grim throes,
The smiting of his song was as a sword,
The light of it was as a beacon flame ;
And though the drift of Time's unpitying snows
Upon the mound that hides his dust be poured,
It may not dim the glory of his name !

GRENVILLE MELLEN

POET that livest in a single line,—
 “Above the fight the lonely bugle grieves,”—
 About thy grave on cloud-encompassed eves
The banded winds in consonance combine
To breathe forth battle strains ; — a fitting shrine
 For such impassioned utterance ! — the leaves
 Falling the while, and sad autumnal sheaves
Against the sunset etched in weird design.

There is the pathos of all mourning airs,
 And of the fading pageant of the year,
 In unfulfilled ambition such as thine ;
And yet thy brow one leaf of laurel wears ;
 Niggard of favor is the Muse austere,
 Poet that livest in a single line !

THE BIRTH OF THE SONNET

BEYOND where Scylla and Charybdis roared,
In the old days of hale Odyssean worth,
Where pale Proserpine of joy had dearth
In the fair fields of Enna the deplored,
Where asphodels still show their golden hoard,—
The flowerful largess of Sicilian earth,—
There, it is said, the sonnet had its birth,
A limpid song from melody's chalice poured.

And they, the bards who shaped the stately form,
Their names are but blown waifs upon the wind ;
Their bones with yellowed dust long since were one ;
But still the sonnet, living, vital, warm,
In many a bosom lovingly enshrined,
Sings on and on in choral antiphon.

THE TROUBADOURS

WHAT of the bards who in love's white demesne
 Made lyric dalliance, and linked their rhymes
 Beside the rippling Rhone in bygone times,
Each choosing some sweet lady for his queen?
Gallant they were, nor scorned the battle scene,
 Albeit they tuned beneath the scented limes
 Their soft lute-pleadings to the castle chimes
Of fair Provence, girt with its vineyards green.

Shapers of song, if but a jest to-day
 Your art is made, a byword on the lip
 Of those whose hearts this age of trade immures,
 Take courage! you, by right of comradeship,
Have rich inheritance from such as they; —
 You are the heirs of all the troubadours!

THE SONNETS OF ROSSETTI

DREAM-LED, methought I wandered through a maze
Wherein immortal Beauty had her bower ;
Delicious waftures from the jasmine-flower,
And floating veils of delicate amber haze,
Mysteriously adown mysterious ways
Were borne, and every part of every hour
Had Song's enchanting cadence for its dower,
Pæans immaculate in Beauty's praise.

Like this beguiling maze his sonnets seem
Wherein the questing wanderer may find
Harmonies haunting as the twilight wind,
Charms as elusive as the shores of dream ;
Perfumes far-drifted from the Isles of Ind,
And all of Beauty's glamour and its gleam.

TO THOMAS S. JONES, JR.

I CAN recall within some orient land,
Where every dawn is like a golden psalm,
How in a mosque, beneath a stately palm,
I saw a rare mosaic, deftly planned —
Marble as stainless as is Beauty's hand ;
Deep chrysoberyl glistening like the calm
Of ocean ; agate like the tufted balm
Burning in August woods when noons are bland.

Aye, and the burnished bosom of the jade,
The violet veins of lapis-lazuli,
The topaz-heart that holds the sun in fee ;
Thus is your song-mosaic interlaid,
Not only lovely to the outer eye,
But to the inner sense a harmony !

*The varied Book of Life,
How hurriedly we con!
Through pages sown with grief and strife
We reach the colophon.*

*We would peruse it still
Despite its stress, but nay,
It must be closed, saith the Great Will,
And laid aside for aye!*



FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY COPIES OF
THIS BOOK PRINTED ON VAN GELDER
HAND-MADE PAPER AND THE TYPE
DISTRIBUTED IN THE MONTH OF
OCTOBER MDCCCCXVII





GL 1/28660149

